From IJIS: A National Consensus vs a Federal Standard

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There is a deep-rooted appreciation in the information technology world that standards contribute to progress, and we certainly have a multitude of examples of this axiom. The most notable standards are perhaps those created by the World Wide Web consortium that has created the many standards that make the Web a world-wide reality. The best measures of the value of a standard are the extent of its adoption, and the speed by which adoption takes place.

Most of the technology related standards under which business is done have in fact been created by industry. Many technology standards are basically agreements on how specific technologies will be physically or logically constructed so as to make interconnectivity or interoperability a possibility. The wall plug that makes connecting to power a universal reality is a great example of a global standard. A host of standards development organizations (ANSI [2], ISO [3], OASIS [4], NIST [5], etc.) are consortia of mostly industry contributors who come together to agree on standards for everyone?s best interest, and these organizations have well-developed processes for gaining acceptance of their work.

The federal government has recognized the value of industry setting standards for many topics, and the Office of Management and Budget has even published a circular (A-119) that ?directs agencies to use voluntary consensus standards in lieu of government-unique standards except where inconsistent with law or otherwise impractical.?

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